

Mr. Ford's Page

THE ideal country is not that in which the citizens go to the Government every morning for their milk, every noon for their dinner, and every night for their bed. A country where the people were taught and trained to such state-dependence as that, would be a most benighted one; it would consist in national slavery, with no initiative save at the top.

And yet it is precisely that idea which is being more and more tightly fastened on the public mind today. The people are being taught to look to Government for their baths, to look to Government for their recreation, to look to Government to supply the common sense and common foresight which every individual ought to possess if the nation is to be a strong nation.

The movement has run riot in our large cities where amateur welfare workers hold sway. In the matter of health, the spirit of inquisitiveness and domination has gone as far as it can, and we have the spectacle of vast populations depending, not on Sanitation, not on Hygiene, not on the good faith and loyalty of Nature—no; but depending on Government, as if good health came from the mints, like money.

It is true, of course, that some things must be done collectively—our parks and schools and various municipal, state and national services must be undertaken as a collective duty. It is also true that many forms of helpfulness to those who have fallen victims to their own vices, thriftlessness, or to the pressure of the present social system, must be undertaken collectively. It is a good thing to teach a submerged family how to live decently and even to provide the means for them to live decently, if in doing so we exalt the idea of Decency, and not merely the idea of Government.

But it is the idea of Government helpfulness that has excessively increased the last few years, as if the Government were a creative fountain of every human blessing. And that idea is a very dangerous one: it is dangerous because it develops a people who hang to its government like a calf to its mother, and thus assists that inevitable decay of government which comes with too much power, and which results in the tragic misleading of a helpless people.

The whole idea that Government is akin to God and can supply us with anything originates most probably in the fact that Government mints the money. The average person's idea of the power of money borders on the grotesque. Money is the greatest fiction ever offered mankind. Money is the most inert thing in the world. That coin never was created that ever did a single thing for anybody.

But, in the present system, all wealth is eventually counted in money, and the Government makes the money, therefore great is the Government! People reason that way. If every man had a mint in his woodshed the fiction of money would soon be exposed. If someone should discover how gold could be manufactured and sold for 10 cents a pound, it would be the greatest liberative act in the history of economics.

Government may make the money, but it is the people whose labor gives the value to money. There may be all the difference in the world between Money and Wealth. Look at the money of so many of the foreign nations today. As mere money, it is just as good as it ever was. But how much is it worth? Next to nothing. Why? Because all the true wealth which the people had created and which gave value to the money has been destroyed. Therefore, money in those countries has become like a check with no funds behind it. Money is only a check written on the wealth created by the people.

It was a great stratagem, a great trick, a great piece of brilliant chicanery when the nations were persuaded to adopt Gold as the supreme sign of value. Why? Because there is more value in the world than there is gold. But when gold regulates commerce, it is compelled to flow through the hands of those who own the

gold. And who owns the gold? A certain group in the world who would be reduced to nothing tomorrow if the fiction of gold were exploded—for gold is all they have! And yet, having gold, they rule the world. By withdrawing their gold from the use of the people, they slow up the processes of the whole world and create "panics" at will.

But, the people seldom look beneath the surface. Gold to them is gold, stamped with the Government sign of value—therefore, great and all-powerful is the Government.

Why, if every penny of money were destroyed in the United States tomorrow the country would not be one bit poorer in actual wealth. Trade would be slowed up, because we have learned to place our whole trading faith in gold and silver and bank notes instead of in our fellow men; big business might not be possible at all, nor modern communication, and perhaps less real wealth might be created for a time; but no wealth would be destroyed, for wealth

is not money. Money is useful to us as a dependable sign of values, but it is the dependability of the values created by labor that makes the currency dependable.

So much for Government in that respect. It is our bookkeeper. It should also be our referee, but too often it is not. Every man wants to take his own part in the work of life. He wants to make his own way, stand on his own feet, reap his own rewards. The average man does not want an unfair advantage over anybody else—he is willing to start at the line, equally with all. But he does not want to be the victim of an unfair game against him. He doesn't want his fair start taken from him, nor his fair efforts deliberately hindered. That is where Government ought to come in—as a referee, to stop the unfairness. It is one thing for people to expect Government to make their fight for them, and quite another thing for them to expect that Government will see to it that they are allowed to make a fair fight. That is the great pressure today: so many men believe that the fight is not on the square.

Government ought to embody the conscience of the people. It ought to be the visible expression of all that the people believe to be good and fair and strong and right. Of course it isn't, because after all, the Government is just a handful of people lifted out of the nation, and sometimes not the very best people at that. However, regardless of that, it is true that this handful of people are surrounded by much the worse influences in the country.

But the point is, if Government would act as a fair referee and see the game move on honestly, it would be rendering a help much more needed than all this "uplift" and "welfare" stuff that is being attached to it today.

As a matter of fact, so-called welfare work soon degenerates into plain impudence. It creates a sense of dependence which is unwholesome for both parties. The best welfare work in the world is to bring people to a place of independence and moral equality.

It is very significant of the tendency in human nature to play the tyrant, that a great deal of this government chaperonage comes from socialistic propaganda. Socialism in its more fixed forms contemplates the attachment of each individual to the state, as a child is attached to its milk bottle by a rubber tube. Now, this of course gives the State complete tyranny over the individual. In Russia they have as free a state as can exist—theoretically. On paper it is very alluring. But, what is the actual case? In Russia a few men are free—a comparative handful are free. Tyranny actually exists simply because human beings have been linked up to the State as a matter of life and death.

Children in our own country are being weaned away from their homes by many schemes that attach them to the ward or municipal government. Much of the so-called "community" activity is merely an effort to institutionalize the normal human impulses. Of course, the people who have resources within their own characters do not follow this movement at all. But multitudes do. And the result is not good.

CERTAIN people are overdoing the campaign that teaches the people to depend on the Government. We see in our country the growth of a movement that trains both children and adults to look to the Government for health, recreation, entertainment, baths, and for many other things. The results are not good. We are rearing a generation of dependents. It is not good for any government to have a people entirely dependent on it. And, as for the people, it reduces them to the status of adult babies. Much of the so-called "community" work is only institutionalizing the normal impulses of the people. We want individuality in America, independence and equality. We can never reach it by making the people the moral dependents of the Government or any Government agency.